

THE INN AT RANCHO SANTA FE

Rancho Santa Fe, California

One of the best mistakes

a railroad ever made was planting this grove of eucalyptus. The Inn at Rancho Santa Fe now sits on more than twenty acres of the planting, a lush tropical garden where bougainvillea, acacia, magnolia, palm trees, wild flowers and even strawberries flourish. Above, the tiled roof of one of the inn's cottages.



The forty-foot-high eucalyptus trees that give the Inn at Rancho Santa Fe its luxuriant, junglelike setting were all part of a dreadful mistake. In 1906, the Atcheson, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad purchased almost nine thousand acres of unpromising Southern California countryside that had once been part of a Mexican land grant. The idea was that the company, hoping to ensure itself of a permanent supply of wooden railroad ties for its expanding operations, would literally grow its own. The Santa Fe planted three million seedlings imported from Australia in the sandy California soil, and the exotic trees shot up like weeds. Unfortunately, when the railroad later discovered that it was impossible to cut a flat, usable tie out of the twisted trunk of a eucalyptus tree, the project had to be abandoned. The trees continued to flourish, and the railroad decided to turn the rest of the unplanted acreage into a citrus farm, with a part set aside for residential development.

The first structure, built of adobe blocks in the traditional California mission style, was used to accommodate prospective land buyers and is now the main building of the inn. In 1941, George Richardson bought the building and some surrounding acreage with an eye toward turning it into a quiet resort where guests could enjoy a bit of peace in the California sun. Over the years, he added more cottages, gardens and walkways until the Inn at Rancho Santa Fe became a tiny little community all its own, where some seventy-five guests could enjoy the more than twenty acres of lush surroundings in leisurely seclusion. It was the perfect place for Mary Pickford to come to get away from the clamor of Hollywood. The eminent judge Harold Medina once spent



High, wide and then some.

There is a basic grandness to the interior design. Left, the main lounge sports the family's collection of antique sailing ships and their grandmother's treasures from the Orient. Above, the breakfast room overlooks the swimming pool.

a month here, relaxing in one of the cottages while translating a book into Greek.

In 1958, the inn was sold to Stephen W. Royce, a well-known California hotelier, and has remained in the Royce family ever since.

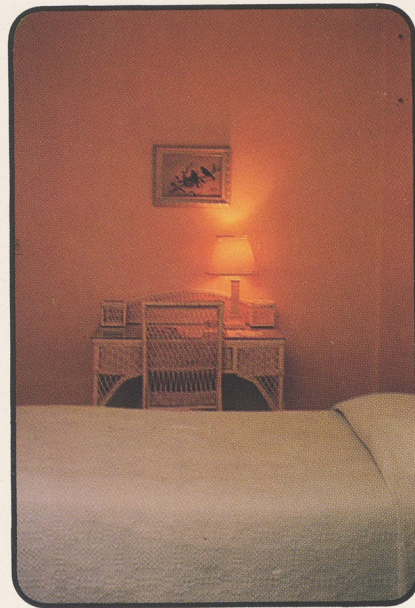
The Inn at Rancho Santa Fe remains a quiet complex of small cottages set amidst a flourish of vibrant, almost tropical, greenery. A Brazilian pepper plant twines around the front door of the main building, and out on the grounds are stands of eucalyptus, acacia, avocado and palm trees interlaced with the purple of bougainvillea blossoms. The acreage requires five grounds keepers working full-time to tend the gardens, which are filled with ornamental flowers and terraces of rose bushes.

The cottages are simply and comfortably outfitted with western-style furniture. Most of them have their own secluded porches. The emphasis at the inn is on ease and comfort rather than on dramatic architectural or design effects.

It is a home of quiet pleasures. There is tennis on the property, and golfing arrangements can be made on any of three nearby courses. The inn maintains its own beach cottage at Del Mar for its guests and will readily pack them a picnic lunch.

The town of Rancho Santa Fe is a small, prosperous community that strives for homogeneity—a board of architects supervises all construction in the area. All the shops and buildings are cast in the same Spanish-style mold as the inn.

The inn's main building serves as both a clubhouse for guests and



A natural order.

There are twenty separate cottages on the grounds, many named for flowers or trees. Above left is Honeysuckle. Private patios such as the one at right are attached to many of the cottages. Five full-time grounds keepers are on hand to care for the landscaping.

one of the principal social centers for the community. There are four dining areas, including the charming book-lined Library Room, and the Patio Room, which in the summer opens out onto a patio flanked with brilliant poinsettias and hanging plants.

The lounge area, a favorite place both before and after dinner, is one of the most spectacular rooms likely to be found in a western country inn. A huge, thirty-by-forty-foot room, it is filled with Royce family heirlooms. Mr. Royce's grandmother had traveled in China and returned with some exquisite examples of Oriental arts and crafts. Wall tapestries, dolls, countless vases and bowls, and a magnificent piece of needlework done in gold thread are some of the treasures on display.

In this age of computerized hotel keeping, the Inn at Rancho Santa Fe insists on maintaining the old traditions. Dan Royce, the present innkeeper, requires the staff to know the guests' names *before* they arrive. Dan appears willing to give a guest the shirt off his back, and if not that, at least his jacket. One evening a guest appeared for dinner without the requisite coat, and Dan loaned him his. Naturally, it fit.



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